

REMARKS

Favorable reconsideration and allowance of this application in view of the amendments above and remarks below are requested.

As a procedural note, the present amendment is being filed concurrently with a formal Request for Continued Examination (RCE) under 37 CFR §1.114. Accordingly withdrawal of the "finality" of the June 1, 2005 Official Action is in order so as to allow entry and consideration of the amendments and remarks presented herewith.

By way of the amendment instructions above, independent claim 9 has been revised so as to emphasize that the heat fixing step (c) is accomplished at a heat-fixing temperature of between 120°C to 180°C for a time sufficient to fix the molecular state of the stretched polyoxymethylene product. Support for such revisions can be found in the originally filed specification at page 10, lines 15-17 and page 11, line 1.

In addition, claim 9 has been revised so as to change "normal pressure" to its equivalent expression "atmospheric pressure". Commensurate changes have also been made to the specification.

No question of "new matter" within the purview of 35 USC §132 is presented by changing the term "normal pressure" to "atmospheric pressure" since such terms are known by those skilled in the art as being equivalent expressions of the same pressure condition. For example, the fact that such terms are clearly and unequivocally known in the art to be equivalent expressions of the same pressure condition is evidenced by relatively recently issued U.S. Patents, specifically U.S. Patent Nos. 6,960,681 (Example 28); 6,960,673 (penultimate paragraph preceding Examples) and 6,960,672 (Ex. 1-1). See also, U.S. Patent Nos. 5,217,579 and 4,645,570.

In addition, a web-based search for the term "normal pressure" reveals that Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Normal_pressure&redirect=no

refers the reader immediately to "atmospheric pressure" at:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normal_pressure

Thus, this is further evidence of the art-recognized equivalency between the terms "normal pressure" and "atmospheric pressure".

With respect to Duracon[®] M25-04, a polyacetal copolymer commercially available from the applicants' assignee, it is further noted that such copolymer possesses a MI of about 2.5 g/10 min and has about 1.3 to about 1.5 moles of oxyalkylene unit content per 100 moles of oxymethylene units. Such information pertaining to Duracon[®] M25-04 polyacetal copolymer is publicly available and thus well known to those skilled in this art.

The only issues remaining to be resolved in this application are the Examiner's art-based rejections. Specifically, prior claims 9 and 18-20 attracted a rejection alternatively under 35 USC §102(b) as allegedly anticipated by, or under 35 USC §103(a) as allegedly obvious over, Aoshima et al (USP 4,668,761). In addition, Aoshima was applied again to reject separately claims 13-17 under 35 USC §103(a). As will become evident from the following discussion, Aoshima is clearly inappropriate as a reference against the amended claims herein.

In this regard, applicant notes that the step of "heat fixing" according to the present invention is accomplished so as to heat-set the stretched polyoxymethylene (POM) copolymer at a temperature condition of 120⁰C to 180⁰C. Thus, even in the event the stretched POM product is cooled below the heat fixing temperature, according to the present invention, the stretched POM product may nonetheless be subjected to such heat-fixing step for a time sufficient to fix the molecular state of the stretched POM product. Moreover, because of the relatively small cross-section of the stretched POM product, it is entirely likely that it will cool below the heat-fixing temperature after being stretched but prior to being heat-fixed. The advantages of stretching the extruded POM product under atmospheric pressure conditions and thereafter heat-fixing the stretched

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POM product may be found throughout the originally filed specification, particularly the Examples.

The cited Aoshima et al reference fails to disclose or suggest the method as defined in applicants' pending claims. Specifically, applicants reiterate that the presently claimed invention is patentably distinct from Aoshima in that it requires stretching the melt-extruded product at **atmospheric** pressure and then heat-fixing the stretched product at 120°C to 180°C. Aoshima does not disclose such stretching and heat-fixing steps as defined in claim 9 and thus cannot anticipate or render obvious such claim.

Thus, Aoshima et al explicitly requires in the claims and Examples 1-12 thereof that stretching be accomplished at an **increased** (i.e., above atmospheric) pressure condition, that is at a uniform pressure of a pressurized fluid. Moreover, Aoshima et al necessarily require that the stretching be accomplished at a temperature condition which is not higher than the softening point of the POM material. Nothing is therefore disclosed in Aoshima et al which would suggest to one of ordinary skill in this art that heat-fixing would (or could) be accomplished at a temperature regime of between 120°C to 180°C as required by the present applicants' claims.

Withdrawal of the rejections advanced under 35 USC §§102(b) and 103(a) is therefore in order. Early passage of this application to issue is therefore solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

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